

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

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In 1st Cor. 12:28 Paul shows that government was set in the Church. While this refers to the age of spiritual gifts, yet it shows that it was necessary to have government in the Church.

There must be government in the home or the children will grow up disobedient. There must be government in our public schools, that their work be done. There must be government in nations, counties and states that they may exist. Government is necessary in the things that pertain to this life; how much more necessary in the Church.

That the Church might prosper and fulfill her mission, it is necessary that government should be rightly used in the Church. Where government is not used there is murder, robbery, immorality and evils of all kinds. Government cannot stop them all, but it can punish the offenders and restrain crime. When government is not used in the Church there will be sin and indifference. Church government will not prevent all sin, yet to some extent it will free the Church from its effects, lessen the causes of troubles, and promote peace and harmony.

RESTORATION OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

It is evident that a complete restoration of church government has been and is now in progress among the churches of Christ. Now that a controversy has arisen over Bible colleges," it has brought out and defined the duties of preachers and their relation to the churches and eldership. I mean by this that a few loyal preachers, in a few cases, have assisted churches to deal with "disorderly elders."

Some preachers in trying to find something against such preachers who would do their duty, even though unpleasant, accused them of "usurping authority" over some elders, calling it "evangelistic assumption," which brought on a controversy. The result of this controversy was to get the people to reading the Bible on this point The duties of preachers of the truth, as set forth by 1st Tim. 5:19, Titus 1:5,2:15, were read and understood.

Many preachers are now awake to their duty among the churches, and are ready to do their duty, and apply and follow scriptures that God intended to be used in assisting to correct evils in the Church. Thus a great reformation is sweeping over the churches. Some are trying to oppose it, but they are taking issue with the Almighty!

PURPOSE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

It is necessary to understand the purpose of withdrawing from disorderly members, to see the need of it. It is one way of chastening a member of the Church. It is really the strongest chastisement. Read Heb. 12:5-12. By verse 7 we must endure chastening; according to verse 10 it is for our profit; in verse 11 it "yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

We are to chasten our brother when he does wrong, which is simply to tell him of his fault and what the Bible says for him to do. If he refuses to repent, the church is to use the last resort, the strongest chastisement; that is, withdraw from him in order to get him to repent. For further proof read 1st Cor. 5th chapter. It gives an account of a young man who was guilty of fornication. In verse 5 he was to be delivered "to Satan," which meant to withdraw from him. This was done "for the destruction of the flesh," which meant to destroy that desire of the flesh to commit fornication, "that the spirit might be saved." Here the purpose of delivering this man to Satan was to get him to quit sinning, and save him. According to 2nd Cor. 2; 6-9, it is evident that this man repented. It was for his own good. It was God's strongest chastisement.

In 1st Tim. 1:20 these two men were delivered to Satan, "that they may learn not to blaspheme." They were guilty of blasphemy. They would not listen to Paul; then they were withdrawn from, to teach them not to blaspheme. From these scriptures we can readily see that the main object in withdrawing from disorderly members is to teach them a lesson. It is God's strongest way of teaching. It is the last resort to do as Jude says in verse 23: "Pull a brother out of the fire"! It is also to free the church from sinful members who will not do right. In 1st Cor. 5:5 and 1st Tim. 1:20 Paul tried to pull these people "out of the fire" and save them.

It is the duty of the church towards its members to withdraw from them when disorderly, to bring them to repentance. If the church neglects or refuses to withdraw from disorderly members it withdraws from them God's last and strongest way of shaking off Satan. The church has failed to pull a brother "out of the fire."

Many persons have been brought to repentance by being withdrawn from, and many more would have been if the church had done its duty. But remember, it must not be put off! It must be done at once, to accomplish God's purpose. It must be done before a member's heart is fully set in him to do evil. Eccl. 8:11 — "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." Many churches have not executed sentence against disorderly members and as a result their hearts are "fully set in them to do evil," and the church was to blame for delaying action. It should have been done before their hearts were "fully set in them to do evil." Unnecessary delay will defeat God's design in withdrawing from disorderly members.

CHURCH TROUBLES

Trouble will arise in the church. Knowing this, we should prepare for it. The best preparation a member can make is to be sure that he does not cause trouble. We must study how to avoid trouble, then study how to settle trouble according to the Bible. 1st Cor. 11:19 — "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Here church difficulties are a test of our faith.

Many have turned from the church in time of trouble when they should have stood by it In Matt. 13:21 the Savior says some turn away "in time of tribulation." The church at Corinth had trouble, and there will still be trouble in the Church until Satan is destroyed. With a view to prepare members of the Church to stand this important trial, we pen these lines and thoughts in harmony with the Bible.

To understand troubles in the church, we must give heed to the Bible teaching about them. To settle them we must follow the Bible. It is the standard from which there is no just appeal.

CAUSES OF TROUBLE

There are various causes of trouble in the church. One cause is that some want to change the work or worship of the church by introducing some new doctrine, which those who only want what the Bible teaches must oppose. Division is the result. All such new doctrines are heresies, and are works of the flesh. (Gal. 6:20.) Their advocates are heretics, and should be admonished twice and be rejected. (Titus 3:10.)

Where trouble is caused this way, many wonder who is to blame. It is the one who forsakes the commands of God! (See 1st Kings 18:17,18.) Here Ahab accused Elijah of causing trouble. Elijah just did what the Lord told him. He told Ahab that HE was the troublemaker himself, because HE had forsaken the commands of God. Thus the one who turns aside from the Scriptures is the one who is responsible for the trouble!

Another cause of trouble is over the preacher! Perhaps some want one preacher, and some another. In 1st Cor. 1:11-14, there was division among the brethren at Corinth. Some wanted Paul, some Apollos, and some wanted Cephas. These were all good men, and preached the same thing. They should have endorsed them all, and should have not been divided over them. If the preacher is a good man, and preaches the truth, all should endorse him; but if he is a heretic, and not a good man, all should reject him!

Sometimes women insist on a certain preacher coming "again" to hold them another meeting, hoping to give him another chance to fall in love with their daughters. All sensible people and preachers know that the church is not a matrimonial bureau! The idea of using the church for such a purpose will not be for the best. Sometimes some members of the church want to work some preachers out and others in to preach for them. In all such cases where underhand methods are resorted to, the church will not prosper.

Another fruitful cause of trouble is women planning and scheming in the church. In view of 1st Cor. 14:34 and 1st Tim. 2:12, women are not to be rulers in the church. Some women seem to think that these scriptures only forbid women in the public rulership, but leave them free to work in private, using any kind of an underhand plan to put an elder in office or put one out of office; or get a preacher to preach or get one to quit preaching. God never intended a woman

to rule the church in public or private. Any woman who works through her husband, or any other man, to have her way in the church, will certainly lead the church astray.

There are men who hold the office of elder, but if the truth were known, the woman echoes the ruling, and they do as she says! A man who has such a wife is not qualified for the eldership! When women resort to all such plans and plots in the church, trouble will always follow. A good Christian woman will keep her place.

TOO MANY PREACHERS

Sometimes some congregations are troubled with too many preachers. Such is usually the case when several preachers are congregated together, unless they are out busy; but where they are present at their home congregation every Lord's day there is likely to be some jealousy arise. Some preachers will work against another. There is too much talent in one place going to waste.

It is possible for many preachers to live in one place, at peace. If they will do their duty and try to build up in new places or among weak congregations. Too many preachers and too much preaching are not for the best. All preachers should do their duty, then they will be so interested in building up the Church that they won't want to cause it any trouble.

ON THE FENCE

Where the church has been disorderly for some time, and starts to withdraw from disorderly members, and some little trouble comes up, there usually are some who are "on the fence," so to speak. They say they are "not taking either side." Beware of such members! The church needs the help of all the faithful members to purge out sin. Members cannot stand "neutral"! All such are taking the wrong stand. In Matt. 12:30 Christ says, "He that is not with me is against me." Members who will not stand with the church in time of trouble are not with the Lord! They leave the Lord, to climb on the fence to wait and see how things are going, then they usually go with the crowd.

UNFAITHFUL IN TIME OF TROUBLE

In Prov. 25:19 Solomon says, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint." How true this is! In time of trouble, elders, preachers and churches have made mistakes by putting too much confidence in unfaithful men.

We know the Bible is as plain on church government as it is on baptism. We know it is just as necessary to exclude a disorderly member when he gets disorderly as it is to baptize a person when he wishes to be fully converted. Then, we reason, if a brother believes in baptism he certainly will believe the Lord on church government! But many times we are mistaken!

Members will stand for baptism but will rebel against the Lord on church government! Such are unfaithful and unworthy of our confidence.

AVOIDING TROUBLE

Members of the church should study how to avoid trouble as well as how to settle it. It is better to avoid trouble than to have to settle it. We must not shun our duty to avoid trouble, and ever remember James 3:17— "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." Sometimes people would rather have impurity than trouble, and submit to false teaching or disorder in the church rather than have any trouble getting it out. We must go to trouble, if necessary, in order to have purity.

Many times faithful members have trouble in trying to purge sin out of the church, and they are accused of causing division; but remember that Christ says (in Matt. 10:34)—"I came not to send peace but a sword." That sword was the sword of the Spirit which Paul says (in Eph. 6:17) is the word of God. If following the word of God causes trouble, let it come, — it is Gospel trouble.

Let us never grow weary in well doing. Ever remember James 3:17 — "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." Purity first, then peace. Rom. 12:18 says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Here we are taught to do all we can to live peaceably. Many people could avoid trouble by controlling their tongues and tempers better. In Acts 15:37-41 some contention came up between Paul and Barnabas over a traveling companion; they separated to avoid trouble, after the contention had been "sharp" between them.

RELATION OF OLD TESTAMENT TO NEW ON "CHURCH GOVERNMENT"

In 1st Cor. 10:1 Paul wanted the Corinthians to know about the Jews crossing the Red Sea. They had to learn this from the Old Testament. Again, in Rom. 15:4 Paul says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." These scriptures teach us that we are to learn lessons from the Old Testament. (1st Cor. 10:6-11.) Some of the incidents that happened to the Jews are recorded in the Old Testament for our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after the evil things as they also lusted. Reading the Old Testament and seeing how God dealt with the Jews will help us to understand His attitude toward sin and sinners.

In Num. 16th chapter is a record of rebellion against the leadership of fleshly Israel, typical of rebellion against the eldership of the Church (spiritual Israel). In Jude 1:11 mention is made of "perishing in the gainsaying of Core" (which is the Korah of Num. 16th chapter).

By reading the different accounts of where God punished offenders in the Old Testament, it will aid us to understand human nature, and what to expect under like conditions. In order to understand how to handle sin in the Church, the more we understand about how God dealt

with sinners in the Jewish Age the better. When we take any action against a sinner we must allow the New Testament to tell us what sin is, and what we are to do.

TEACH WHEN STARTING

The best time to teach the church about purging out sin is when it is first started. If it is the understanding that new congregations are to withdraw from unruly members, and they are taught this at the very beginning, they usually will do it; but if they are not so taught, they are at a loss to know what to do when a member gets disorderly.

In Josh. 7:6, when sin came in among the Jews and caused them to be defeated, Joshua fell on his face. He didn't know what to do. As a result of not knowing, he just fell to the earth on his face, and lay there until God (In verse 10) told him to get up. Joshua got up and DID WHAT GOD SAID, and soon sin was cast out. Many elders are like Joshua was; they don't know what to do when sin comes in among them. But not all will obey God when they find out, as Joshua did. Some preachers now are starting congregations and saying little or nothing about church government, and, as a result of not having been taught, they do like Joshua at first did, — when sin enters in among them, — they do nothing because they don't know what to do.

The preacher that baptizes a person can do more with that person than any other preacher can at any other time. Even so, the preacher who starts a congregation can do more with them than anyone else; hence the necessity of him teaching them when starting.

STRENGTHENING THE BODY

Before withdrawing from disorderly members it is very necessary to teach them their duty, and thus strengthen the body. Withdrawing from a disorderly member is an operation on the Body of Christ. When a person is taken to the hospital to undergo a surgical operation the doctors are very careful to see that the patient is strong enough to stand it. This is the reason many patients are kept three or four days before being operated on; the doctors know the necessity of strengthening the patient before the operation. Even so with the church: it must be strengthened by teaching so the members will all stand together and assist the church in doing as the Scriptures direct. When patients have plenty of strength the doctor can proceed at once to perform the operation.

Even so with the church, — when it has been taught along this line they can proceed at once to withdraw from disorderly members; but where churches are weak and have not been taught along this line, they need to be taught so they will all stand together. Some churches have made failures in dealing with sinners, because they have not been sufficiently taught before beginning. The church should be taught along this line until all the loyal members agree to it, and then they are ready to proceed. Where members have not been taught along this line some are liable to oppose the church — not knowing that they are opposing the Scriptures.

WHAT IS DISORDER

"DIS" means NOT; " disorderly" means NOT ORDERLY, or NOT ACCORDING TO ORDERS. In 1st Cor. 16:1, 2 the members of the church were ordered to give on the first day of the week as they had been prospered. If they failed to give as ordered they did not obey orders, hence were disorderly. This is further proven by 1st Cor. 5:11. A covetous man is one who loves money so well that he will not give as prospered, — here he is classed with a fornicator who was to be withdrawn from as a disorderly member. In Acts 5th chapter is an account of a man and woman being dealt with in a severe manner for lying to the Holy Spirit as a result of covetousness. They were disorderly. From these scriptures we have proven covetousness a disorderly walk.

Then if we are ordered to lay by in store on the first day of the week and we do not go to worship so we can lay by in store, we are surely disorderly! James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin"! We know to do good on the first day of the week by giving as we have been prospered, and if we fail to do this we sin, hence are disorderly.

But this means that we must come together on Lord's day. This is the first argument that we present to prove that willful staying away from the worship on Lord's day is a disorderly walk. This much proven establishes the fact that members who will not do their duty are guilty of disorderly walk and should be brought to repentance or withdrawn from. This put into practice by the churches will soon educate their members to assemble on the Lord's day to do their duty and, as a result, the churches will have members that will attend.

Some elders and members are fighting the idea that all who will not do their duty should be withdrawn from, yet they are complaining and wondering how to get their members to attend when they are rejecting the very remedy that God gave to teach them to attend. Like a man who wants to be a Christian yet rejects the Gospel, — he rejects the only means that God gave.

In Acts 2:42 we read where the church had the Lord's table. In Acts 20:7 the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread. In Heb. 10:25 they were not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is. In view of these scriptures we learn that the disciples were ordered to assemble on the first day of the week to break bread, and a failure to do this is surely a disorderly walk! These scriptures make a double argument in support of the fact that willful forsaking of the Lord's day worship is a disorderly walk. We are ordered to lay by in store on the first day of the week; we are ordered to break bread;—but these are to be done in the assembly on the first day of the week. If we fail to assemble on the first day of the week we fail to attend to our duty and violate Heb. 10:25 which says, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Many who get their ideas of disorderly walk from the criminal laws of our land, when they should get them from the Bible, seem to think that forsaking the assembly on Lord's day is not a disorderly walk; but if they will carefully note the above scriptures it will help them to a better understanding.

In 1st Cor. 6th chapter fornication is a disorderly walk. In 1st Tim. 1:20 blasphemy is a disorderly walk. In Titus 3:10 heresy, or false teaching, is a disorderly walk. Read Gal. 5:19-22; you will find a list of the lusts of the flesh, which are certainly not orderly!

In Matt. 5:13 Christ says his disciples are the "salt" of the earth" and when the salt hath lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of man." Salt has a preserving, or keeping, power; so we are to have a saving power. When we lose our influence for good we are like the salt that Christ said was to be "cast out." This proves that when a member of the church gets in such a condition that he will not influence any one for good, he is disorderly, and should be "cast out," or withdrawn from.

In Matt. 5:16 we are ordered to "let our lights shine," that others may see our good works. If we fail to do any good works we fail to do as ordered, hence are disorderly. I am not writing this against members of the church who are sick, or otherwise lawfully hindered from attending Lord's day worship; but it does apply to all who can go but will not, and to those who deceive themselves by thinking they can't go when they can! It is the duty of the church to teach its members to assemble on the first day of the week.

As withdrawing is the strongest way of teaching, it becomes necessary sometimes to apply the strongest teaching to some members of the church, and withdraw from them, as Paul says in 1st Tim. 1:20, "that they may learn," and not forsake the assembly. To say that the church cannot withdraw from a member that will not do his duty, is to say that the church cannot give him the strongest teaching.

VISITING ERRING MEMBERS

This is a very important duty of the church. Erring members should be visited and instructed before their hearts become fully set in them to do evil. New members should be visited the first time they fail to meet on the first day of the week. I learned the necessity of this by experience. Not knowing my duty, I went visiting instead of going to worship. A good brother who lived in my home town, but who now is nearing eternity's shore, came to me early on Monday morning to instruct me about the necessity of doing my duty. Had he not done this I doubt if I ever would have remained with the church. In the 15th chapter of Luke the Savior left "the ninety and nine" and went after "the sheep that was lost." Many members have failed to do their duty because they didn't know it! The preacher who tries to get the biggest number of converts usually says little about "duty"; as a result his converts don't know their duty. It is the duty of both preachers and church to teach new members.

In cases where members become disorderly, they should be visited and warned. Sometimes disorderly members will make it a point to keep out of the way of elders who come to plead

with them to do right. When such members avoid or hide from elders, and refuse to be seen, the elders have done their duty, and should withdraw from such.

As to who is to do the visiting, Gal.6:1 says, "Ye which are spiritual restore such a one." Here Paul limited it to those who were "spiritual." Sometimes elders select some good members to go and visit certain ones because they think they can do more with them. It is wise for the ones who have the most influence with rebellious members to go to them. If a member of the church is guilty of the same thing he couldn't do any good until he took the "beam" out of his own eye. God limits the visiting to "ye which are spiritual."

BRINGING TO JUSTICE

Usually sinners in the church will do all in their power to cover up their meanness. It is therefore necessary to use precaution in bringing them to justice. Matt. 24:12 — "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold"— is a good scripture to use when members have once loved the Lord and grown "cold." You can refer to this scripture to prove that iniquity was the cause of their love for the Lord growing "cold." Usually you can get confession from them. Where the guilty ones will not confess, it must be proven by at least two witnesses. (See John 8:17 and Matt. 18:16.) Two reliable witnesses will establish a fact even in the face of a denial.

Some churches have made mistakes by bringing up cases for discipline without having the proof plain enough to act on; while they may believe the offender guilty, yet it must be proven by a confession or two witnesses! When a member is guilty of disorderly walk and the church has the proof, he can then be withdrawn from if he refuses to repent. Sometimes when dealing with sinners in the church they should not let them know all about how they were trying to get the evidence, so the sinners will have no chance to cover up the evidence.

In Acts 6:7, after Ananias had lost his life, Peter did not tell his wife what they had done with him. Had she known it she would have had a chance to make a denial. By Peter not letting her know what was done to her husband, she told the original agreement; thus Peter secured her confession. Had she known that her husband was dead as a result of lying, she could have told the truth in an effort to clear herself; but Peter didn't inform her, and thus she told what they had agreed upon. Here is wisdom that elders and preachers will do well to learn. It will help them in proving sin.

EXCUSES

In visiting members of the church who will not do their duty each Lord's day, you will meet with many excuses. Most of them are not genuine, but erring members will make them when they are not the reason. Usually the reason they don't attend is because they don't want to; but when asked why they don't attend some excuse is manufactured which is not the reason. In

Luke 14:18-21 is an account of excuses offered by those who were bidden to the supper. These excuses are an index to many today that people offer for not attending worship. By reading verse 24 we see the Bible says these people that made excuses were unworthy. And that is just the case with excuse-makers — they feel their unworthiness and don't want to be there, hence the excuses.

Sometimes we hear an excuse like this: "I am too old and feeble to go now." In order to find out the truth of such excuses, it might be well to find out if they went to worship when they were young before they got "old and feeble"! Are they too "old and feeble" to go to town, to weddings, funerals, birthday dinners, or to the polls to vote? Many members of the church are always on hands at such places, yet claim to be "too old and feeble" to go to worship. It begins to look like they don't want to go!

Another common excuse is, "We haven't any way to go." Let the church furnish them a conveyance; then if they won't go it will be plainly demonstrated that they don't want to! You might find out if they have any way to go to town or to go visiting. If they have, it then begins to look like they don't want to go to worship.

Another excuse is: "The weather is bad." Find out if they attend when the weather is good, if you want to test the truth of their excuse. Find out if they haul feed to their cattle over bad roads and in bad weather. Many people lay it on the weather, when the truth is, they don't want to go!

Another excuse is; "We want to come but we can't take the children out," To find out the truth of this excuse, inquire if they take the children to town, or go visiting and take them. If yes, there is a chance to believe that their excuse is no good. Find out if they attended before the children were born. Usually such members don't attend after their children are grown.

Another excuse is: "My mother lives with us, and I have to stay at home with her." There have been a few cases where members made such excuses. Soon afterward their mother died, — then what happened? The "objection" was removed. You would naturally suppose that they were free to come; but instead they looked for another "excuse" and something else to hide behind!

Sometimes women say, "It is too hot to go to church." But as soon as company comes they can spend two hours over a hot stove, cooking, and enjoy it; while when it comes to serving the Lord it is "too hot." It looks like someone doesn't want to serve the Lord!

When people are sick and cannot go, they need no excuse; but when it is plain that they don't want to attend they should be looked after. Many elders, while visiting wayward members, will allow them to put up any kind of an excuse. Don't allow it! A few well-directed questions will show you that their "excuses" amount to nothing. Be sure to sound all "excuses" well, and

before you release a member from duty be sure the Lord will. Remember, no one ever went to Heaven on excuses!

WARN THE UNRULY

1st Thess. 5:14 says, "Now we exhort you, brethren, — warn them that are unruly!" In the marginal reading of this passage "disorderly is used for "unruly"; thus we are to warn the disorderly. Sometimes a warning from the eldership will cause the disorderly to reform; then again, disorderly members are warned and it does them no good. They reason that "the elders never did withdraw from anyone, and it is all talk — they won't do anything." This is true of some elders — a warning from them will do no good because they have been "so easy," and threatened so much that no one has any confidence in their warning. But with the elders who do their duty a warning has an effect; for the disorderly know it will be carried out.

TIME TO HANDLE

It is very important to know the time to deal with offenders. Churches have generally attended to such matters after the communion, to avoid unpleasant feelings that time. But if all are of the right spirit we need not have unpleasant feelings about using God's strongest argument on erring members. In 1st Cor. 5:4 Paul says, "When ye are gathered together" — any regular gathering of the church. Verses 7, 8: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven." "The feast" here refers to the communion. The time to purge out sin is before the communion, that we might keep the feast —not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

MANNER OF HANDLING

One of the important things not to be overlooked in dealing with a sinner in the church is the manner of handling and the spirit manifested by the ones who take the lead in it. It should be done in the spirit of meekness by those who are living righteous lives. It is an effort to restore an erring brother. Gal. 6:1 tells us to do it in the spirit of meekness. Again, it is instructing those who oppose themselves and in 2nd Tim. 2:25 it must be done in the spirit of meekness. Sometimes elders and preachers by displaying the wrong spirit leave the impression that it was done for spite-work, when they should have displayed the spirit of meekness, as they would in obeying the Lord in any other work.

PROOF MUST BE PLAIN

In Joshua 7th chapter, where Achan was stoned for stealing, it was plainly proven on him; he confessed to the stealing; then Joshua sent messengers after the stolen goods. The goods were brought and laid out before all — then he was stoned. The stoning was done after the proof had been made plain.

In Num. 25th chapter, where Phinehas slew this man and woman, it was plainly stated that this evil was done in the presence of Moses and all the congregation. All the Jews knew of this sin. In Matt 18:15-18 you will note that Christ says have witnesses to prove every word. The point is, be sure and make the proof plain! If the proof is not plain, so that all men can see, some are liable to doubt the man's guilt, and refuse to stand by the church in dealing with the offender. If the guilt is clearly established, no one can doubt it!

A PUBLIC MEETING

In some cases, when it becomes necessary to deal with a sinner in the church, some want to hold a secret meeting, to withdraw from the person. The Scriptures bear out a public meeting. In Luke 15th chapter the man who found the lost sheep called together his neighbors and friends and informed them that he had found it. From this it is safe to say that a member who has sinned should make his confession as public as the sin was committed. All who know that he has done wrong should know that he has made it right.

In Acts 5:14 — "Believers were the more added to the Lord; multitudes both of men and women." This was immediately after two members of the Church had been dealt with for sinning. It is safe to say that the outside world knew of it. If such work was kept secret the world would never know of it. In some communities there are men who will unite with the church as soon as it withdraws from its disorderly members. They know that they are doing wrong in the church and they know that it is doing wrong in keeping them there; then should not the world know that the church has done right in putting them out? Certainly!

In Acts 26:26 Paul, in speaking concerning the Gospel said, "This thing was not done in a corner;" that is, it was not done in secret. Secrecy is not a Gospel principle. "Nothing have I said in secret," the Savior says. Our "lights" are not to be under a "bushel;" and as dealing with sin is a good work and a part of the Gospel why should it be done in secret? If the world saw more sin cast out it would be a great lesson to it and teach all to respect the church.

In 1st Cor. 5th chapter Paul wrote in the Bible about the Corinthian church having a fornicator in it. Wherever the New Testament is read the world will know about this man. Paul wasn't afraid that making it known would work against the church. He made it public. Fair-minded people will stand by the Lord and Paul and say "such a man ought to have been put out of the church, unless he repented."

MAKING SIN KNOWN

Now and then there are objections to telling the sinner's name and the sin of which he is guilty. In 2nd Sam. 11, 12 is an account of king David putting a man in the front of the battle to get him killed, so that David could get his wife. God put an account of it in the Bible — the king's name and the sin of which he was guilty! In Mark 14:71 is an account of Peter cursing and swearing;

God had it recorded in the Bible. There have been many of God's people in both the Old and New Testaments that sinned; their names and the sin they were guilty of were written in the Bible. Wherever the Bible is read these things will be known. In dealing with offenders it is proper and right to call the name and offense, in view of the scripture referred to.

WHO IS TO DO THE WITHDRAWING?

The church is to withdraw from disorderly members. It isn't just the elder, or leader — it is the whole church, the faithful brethren. But who is to declare the withdrawing? The Scriptures say, in Gal. 6:1 — "Ye which are spiritual restore such a one." As withdrawing from a disorderly member is the last and strongest remedy to restore an erring member, it is limited to "ye which are spiritual." Where there are elders they usually attend to it. Where there are no elders, it should be the leader, or preacher who called them together.

In Acts 20:20 Paul says that he both showed and taught publicly and from house to house. In view of this scripture, and 1st Tim. 1:20 — where Paul says he delivered these men to Satan or withdrew from them — he evidently set the example and showed the elders at Ephesus by declaring non-fellowship himself. No evil will follow, though some may try to make trouble. In Acts 4:25 the "heathen" are said to "rage," yet that didn't overthrow a work of God. Wicked members who are withdrawn from may rage and everything else; but that doesn't overthrow the work.

Let the members keep quiet in the meeting house when there is any trouble in withdrawing from disorderly members, especially with contentious persons or heretics. In such cases, it is always best for the faithful members of the church to at once quietly leave the meetinghouse and go to their homes, refusing to discuss the matter or argue the case, so that there will be no chance for anyone to lose his temper or do anything rash. When the doctor operates on a person he is not allowed to meddle with the bandage and thus irritate the place, but instead he is to let it heal up. Even so with the church — when a disobedient member has been cut off we are not to open or reopen the place, but let it heal up for the good of the church.

DETAILS

There are many little details to be arranged in dealing with offenders in the church. Different elders and preachers have different ways of getting at things. In baptizing, different preachers go at it a little differently, yet withal the person is put under the water. Different congregations do differently at their worship; yet all meet on the first day of the week, have the loaf, fruit of the vine and contribution. The little details may differ in some points, yet with each one the worship is observed. Thus it is in casting out disorderly members. Many preachers and elders handle the details a little differently, yet withal the offender is cast out of the church.

I have known of preachers and others making a fight against purifying the church. They made their opposition on some little details. Such persons showed their lack of knowledge of church government, by supposing that the Lord put every little detail in the Bible. Suppose that a man did make a mistake on some little point, that wouldn't make it right for a sinner to stay in the church! A lawyer may defeat justice through some little clerical error, yet that doesn't prove the person innocent. Each church will handle its cases of disorder differently, yet in the main all such keep the church pure.

Many times when members don't want to do the will of the Lord they oppose discipline on some little incidental points. It is child's play or worse and should be ignored or dealt with for rebellion, as the case would justify. In performing an operation on a patient, doctors and nurses will handle their surgical instruments differently, yet they all keep them CLEAN. Suppose someone would oppose a physician as "unskilled" and make his fight on "the way he goes at an operation" and not what he does? Anyone can see it is only play. Even so with opposing church government.

EFFECTS ON THE CHURCH

Withdrawing from disorderly members will have a good effect on the church, if done right. It will cause the rest of the members to fear God. In Num. 16th chapter God executed sentence against some evil-doers — the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up. In verse 34, the rest of the people were afraid lest they should be swallowed also. In Rev. 12:13 we are to fear God and keep his commandments.

Fearing God is an aid to us in keeping his commandments. Excluding disorderly members will produce the fear of God in the rest of the church, which fear will help them to keep the commands of God. In Deut. 21:18-22 God *told* the Jews how to deal with an offender. According to verse 21, the man was to be stoned to death in order to put away evil from among the Jews — that all Israel might hear and fear. This had a good effect upon them; it caused them to both hear and fear.

Some object to excluding disorderly members saying it will destroy the influence of the church. This is a mistake. Will it destroy the influence of the county or State to expose and punish a criminal? No; it will increase its influence. Even so with the church. When the church exposes and excludes rebellious members it causes the world to respect the Church. Sin is the only thing that can destroy the influence of the church.

Sometimes we hear people say that they would not live in a church that used discipline. They must be afraid it might be used on them sometime! Would they want to live in a country that did not punish evil-doers and enforce its laws to protect life, property and chastity? No; they would not. Then why not want God's laws enforced in the Church? In Acts 5th chapter is an account of an apostle dealing with sinners in the church. Note the effect on the church.

Many seem to think that if the church goes to withdraw from disorderly members that it will tear up the church. But instead it will be a benefit to the church; if done right. Where churches have trouble in dealing with offenders is where some oppose excluding them instead of standing by the church as the Scriptures require. In 1st Cor. 5th chapter when Paul gave the church instructions to deliver a certain man to Satan, he had no fears of tearing up the church. Christ built the Church and when the Church follows his instructions it will not be torn up. In the 5th chapter of Acts, where Ananias and his wife were dealt with, Peter had no fears of tearing up the Church. According to verse 11, "great fear came upon all the church." In this case it had a good effect on the Church — it caused them to fear. Those ideas of some — that "it will cause trouble" or "it will tear up the church" — are mistakes. In Rev. 2:2 John commended the church at Ephesus because they could not bear "those that are evil;" that is, they withdrew from evil members! It left the church in good condition. Following the teachings of Christ will keep the Church pure and in a prosperous condition; while neglect and failure along these lines will allow Satan to get the advantage and the church will die.

EFFECT ON THE WORLD

When there is sin in the church and some of the members are disorderly, some members will not want to withdraw from them, wondering "what the outside world will think" if they found it out. They would rather cover up sin than let the outside world know that they are pure. According to Prov. 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." It is wrong to cover up sin in the church! Too many churches are not prospering because they have covered up sins in them. The world usually knows when there is sin in the church; it should know also when the sinners were put out.

There is nothing secret about withdrawing from disorderly members any more than baptizing a person, setting the Lord's table or any other part of the work of the Church. Paul wrote in the New Testament about withdrawing from a fornicator in the Corinthian church. (See 1st Corinthians 5th chapter.) It didn't keep any one out of the church, neither does such good work keep any one out of the Church today. Wherever the New Testament is read people know about Hymenaeus and Alexander being put out of the church by Paul for blasphemy. (See 1st Tim. 1:20.) Paul wasn't afraid to let it be known. God never saw fit to keep it a secret; fearing that it would have an evil effect on the world.

According to Acts 5:14 just after Ananias and Sapphira were dealt with the church began to have additions at once. When God executed judgment against this man and woman (Peter pronouncing sentence), the outside world saw that there was one Church that would not tolerate sin and they wanted to belong to it. Thus "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts 6:14) This had such a good effect on the world that it helped to get additions to that church. In many places there are sinners in the church and there are people that want to come into that church but stay out on account of evil members.

In this same church there may be members who are afraid to withdraw from these disorderly members "for fear outsiders may find it out and turn against the church," though the world and God are already against it! The only way for the Church to keep the respect of the world is to cast out sinful members who will not repent.

CHURCH TO JUDGE

Usually when evil members are rejected by the church they accuse the church of "judging" them, quoting Matt.7:1 — "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In this scripture the Savior refers to their being saved; this was before the plan of salvation was given. Without knowing the conditions upon which a person would be saved it would surely be wrong to attempt to say. But when it comes to what kind of a person is to remain in the church, it is to judge. (See 1st Cor. 5:12.)

Paul, in writing concerning withdrawing from disorderly members, says, "Do not ye judge them that are within?" Thus the Bible plainly teaches that the church is to judge members according to "righteous judgment." (John 7:24.) Many times evil members or some of the outside world will attempt to give their judgment on the case, but it cannot be followed, as Prov. 28:5 says, "Evil men understand not judgment." The judging of disorderly members is left to the righteous members of the church. Jude 22, 23 — "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Note, here is a difference to be made between some. This implies that judgment is to be used. Where some members fail to attend Lord's day worship on account of sickness, old age or other hindrances, the church in judging is to make a difference between them and the ones who can come but will not. The righteous members of the church are to judge who is to be withdrawn from, according to the Scriptures.

"THE LORD HATH SENT ME"

This is the statement that Moses made in Num. 16:28. When it became necessary to take action against some ungodly men, Moses made it plain that he didn't do it of his own mind, but that the Lord sent him to do it. If they had any fault to find they would have to find it with the Lord, as he was the one that had it done.

When it becomes necessary for the church to withdraw from disorderly members, it should be made plain that it is the Lord that is ordering it done and that they are doing what the Bible requires and must do it to please God. Then if anyone wants to find fault he will have to find it with the One who wrote the New Testament. It is a hard matter to get some elders to withdraw from disorderly members, even if the Bible does say so. If man had his way, no one as a rule would be cast out.

PERSONAL TROUBLES

Matt 18:16-18 is the Savior's plan to settle personal troubles. Some contend that this was before the Church was established and also under the Mosaic law, therefore does not apply to us. The very fact that the Savior says, "Tell it to the church," before the Church was established is proof that it is binding during the existence of the Church. The Church was not in existence when he said, "Tell it to the church"—the meaning is: when the Church is established. This was applied to the Church which had its beginning after the Mosaic law ended.

We still have the Church, therefore this applies to it now, and will as long as the Church is in existence. In this scripture the one who is offended must go to the one who gave offense and tell him of his fault — "between thee and him alone." This doesn't mean when a brother has done you a wrong that you must go and tell everybody about it; but have a private talk with him. If he will hear you, you have gained him; but if not, take two or three witnesses along. Then if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. Then if he neglect to hear the church, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Such a man is not a member of the church, hence this offender is to be as "a heathen man and a publican;" that is, he is to be withdrawn from.

WHEN SIN CANNOT BE PROVEN

There are some cases where members of the church are guilty of sin and deny it. There must be at least two reliable witnesses to prove it. If the two witnesses cannot be secured the case cannot be handled. Even in civil courts there must be sufficient proof to warrant a prosecution. But where the proof is not plain churches had better not take up such cases. If the person continues to do wrong it will come out plain in time.

"THY HAND FIRST UPON HIM"

In Deut. 13:6-12 Moses instructed the Jews about dealing with offenders. He told the person who had a close friend or a near relative that had done wrong, that his hand must be first upon him to put him to death and afterwards the hands of all the people. This is a wise example to follow in the church; that is, when a member of the church is guilty of disorder his closest friends or relatives in the church should make it known to the church that their hands are first upon him and against him, otherwise some might think you would not want him put out because he was your "close friend" or "near relative." Weak members will agree to dealing with some, but when they come to members who are disorderly who have friends or relatives that are prominent in the church, they will hesitate to deal with them fearing that such prominent relatives or friends will oppose it — as a result, nothing *is* done. But if such relatives or friends would make it known that they would stand by the church and thus their hands would be "first upon him," then this supposed difficulty in the minds of weak members would be removed and,

such sinners, after seeing their warmest friends turn against them and stand by the truth, would come nearer repenting.

In Deut. 21st chapter, in the case of a rebellious boy, the father and the mother were the first to deliver up their son; thus their hands were first against him.

OUR RELATIVES

In religious matters we must not let our kindred come between us and our God. Many times members of the church are not in favor of the church dealing with their relatives when they are guilty of offenses. In Deut. 21:18-22 the father and mother were to deliver up their own son, — they could not spare him because he was their child. In Deut. 13:6-12, if the closest friends or relatives of the Jews were to do wrong they could not even spare, conceal or pity them. Here God did not release them from this task simply because it was their relatives. Read Mark 3:31 to the close, and you will see that Christ did not even regard his own mother above the will of his Father. In Matt. 10:37 the Savior says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Here Christ plainly teaches that we are not to regard our own relatives above the word of the Lord. When it comes to the action of the church we must stand by the church regardless of the consequences or the persons involved.

NO PARTIALITY

One of the faults with many in casting sin out of the church is showing partiality. Some elders, leaders and preachers have shown partiality in dealing with relatives, friends or prominent members in the church. To guard against this Paul instructed Timothy, in his 1st letter — 6th chapter, verse 21 — to do nothing "by partiality." All members of the church who become disorderly are to be dealt with according to the scripture that applies to them, regardless of who they are and their position in the church.

If partiality is shown, leaving some favorite sinners in the church whom others want out, it looks like the ones excluded were dealt with because the leaders had a feeling against them. But if the Bible is followed, and no partiality is shown, then all can see that the work is to purify the church because the Bible teaches it. In Num. 16:2 those men who were afterwards killed were said to be men "of renown in the congregation." But because of such renown and high Standing in the congregation God did not regard them. In Num. 25th chapter a man and woman were slain by Phinehas; according to verses 14 and 15 they were people of prominent families, yet in dealing with them Phinehas did not regard their ranker prominence. They were slain because of— sin! No partiality was shown. CANNOT SHIELD. — Sometimes members of the church try to shield their friends or relatives who have done wrong in the church. We cannot afford to be a party to hiding sin in the church that way. We are all working for the good of the church, and should do all in our power to get sin purged out. If we agree to shield a sinning

member, we agree to something that works against the welfare of the church. It would be foolish for a stone-mason to build on one end of a wall and tear down on the other, — so it would be foolish for us to build on one part of the church and tear down on the other. If a person knows of any sin that is working against the welfare of the Church he should do all in his power to correct it; then, if necessary, inform the elders of the offense. In Judges 19th chapter is a record of a great crime being committed by certain men. In the next chapter is an account of the faithful Jews trying to bring these criminals to justice; these wicked men took refuge in the tribe of Benjamin (according to verse 13), the Benjamites refused to deliver them up to be punished, but attempted to shield them. For awhile they made a show of success, but it didn't last long; according to verse 34, and on to the close of the chapter, the tribe of Benjamin was defeated and destroyed as a tribe. According to Judges 21:3, the Israelites mourned and said, "Oh, Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel!" Thus they mourned for a tribe that was gone. This tribe that was destroyed tried to shield some wicked men; their destruction soon followed. A solemn warning to all today who attempt to shield sinners in the Church. (Read Deut. 13:8.) If the relatives or friends of the Jews did wrong, they could not consent to it, they could not hearken to it, their eye could not pity them, they could not spare them, neither could they conceal them. Such Old Testament examples (1st Cor. 10:6) are things written aforetime "for our learning." (Rom. 15:4.) According to 2nd Sam. 20th chapter, Joab besieged the city of Abel, man attempt to capture a wicked man by the name of Sheba. As Joab marched against the city a faithful woman (a mother in Israel) pleaded for her life. Joab told her that he only wanted this wicked man, and if they would deliver him up that he would spare the city. This faithful woman went among the people in her wisdom, and caused this man's head to be thrown over the wall. Had she refused, and tried to shield this wicked man, the city would have doubtless been destroyed.

IT IS WRONG TO UPHOLD EXCLUDED MEMBERS

When erring members have been excluded from one congregation, according to the Scriptures, another congregation cannot scripturally fellowship them without they first repent. Truly repentant Christians will return to the congregations where they did wrong, and make the wrong right. (It is the same Lord over all.) If a man is a sinner in the sight of God, and is withdrawn from in Iowa, and crosses the line into Missouri to unite with another congregation without first repenting, he could not scripturally be received. Crossing a State line into another State won't forgive sin! The God of Iowa is also the God of Missouri! If the Iowa church obeyed God by putting this sinner out because he wouldn't repent, the Missouri church that received him without repentance certainly disobeyed God by receiving him! The Iowa church cleansed the House of God by excluding the one in error, but the Missouri church would be corrupting the House of the same God by receiving him thus. **ONE LOYAL CHURCH SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE ACTS OF ANY OTHER LOYAL CHURCH IN DEALING WITH SINNERS!** In 1st Cor. 5th chapter, when the church at Corinth withdrew from this man who was guilty of fornication, suppose the

church at Ephesus had received him without repentance? They would have surely done wrong. When churches exclude disorderly members they usually want to go to other congregations, and sometimes the congregations are elated at getting such, but I am sure the Lord isn't.

ALL TO ENDORSE

In withdrawing from disorderly members it is necessary, for the good of the church, that all should endorse it. Paul, in writing about the man guilty of fornication in 1st Cor. 5, told them to deliver him to Satan. Then in 2nd Cor. 2:6 he said this punishment was inflicted of many. The punishment was the chastisement or withdrawing from him. All the members agreed to, and helped do it. It was inflicted of many; not just the elders, and the rest oppose it; but they all agreed to it. IT WAS INFILCTED OF MANY. According to Deut. 27:14 (to the close of the chapter), when God's law was read to the people all were to say "Amen." It would have been wrong for any of them not to have said it. Notice, they were all to say it. Had one refused to say "Amen" he would have been regarded as rebellious. According to Deut. 21:18-22, when the parents of a child delivered him to the elders of his city to be stoned, all the men of his city were to stone him. Suppose one would have refused to throw stones, — he would have been rebellious. All the people of his city were to stand by the elders and help them stone the offender. They were to show their endorsement of it by each one throwing stones; thus each one became a party to it, as God required.

When it comes to withdrawing from disorderly members in the church, all of the members should endorse it, and to become parties to it. It wasn't the elders only that stoned the boy, but it was all the people. It isn't the elders now only that withdraw from a disorderly member, —it is all the members. While the elder may take the lead and declare non-fellowship, he is only acting for the church. According to Judges 20th chapter, when some of the sons of Belial were to be brought to justice for their crime, the children of Israel were gathered together as one man. (See verse 1.) They all agreed to punish these men, — all but the tribe of Benjamin. In verse 8 all the men arose as one man saying, "We will not any of us go into his tent, neither will any of us turn into his house." Here they all stood together. Again, in verse 11, "So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city," —knit together as one man. In this chapter we note that all agreed to punish these offenders, — all but the tribe of Benjamin; and its refusal to stand brought its destruction. The lesson is, that when it comes to dealing with offenders all the faithful will stand together and deal with them, while the unfaithful will drawback to their own destruction.

COMPLETENESS

In purging leaven out of the church it is very necessary to get it all out. When doctors attempt to cut out a cancer they know they must get it all out. According to Matt. 3:10 — "The ax is laid to the root of the tree," — which is Bible doctrine. In dealing with sin, God intended to get the evil out by the roots! Evil must be completely taken out of the church. In 1st Cor. 5:6—"A little

leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Thus ills very necessary to cast out all of the evil, that the lump might not be leavened.

WHERE SHALL WE STOP?

This seems to bother many members of the church. When leaven gets into a congregation it infects many members of the church, and in time will leaven the whole congregation. Because we cannot see the stopping place is no reason why we should not start. When the church starts to purge out leaven it can only stop when it gets done. Suppose it should take the whole church, —let it take it! Then the next meeting held should accomplish something. If a church is in such a condition that withdrawing from disorderly members will take all of them, such a church should go down — for the good of the Cause. When buildings in cities get unsafe, they are condemned and torn down, to keep them from falling on some one. When sin entered the Garden of Eden it took every member God had, when he went to cleanse it. Adam and Eve were both driven out. God did not refuse to begin for fear it would take all. We need not fear that there will be no place to stop. The church usually doesn't have to withdraw from many until it will be a warning to the rest. The hardest thing in withdrawing from disorderly members is to get started; then usually they want to stop, and many times do before they get through. This is a work that is much easier to stop than to start. No need to worry about stopping, — that is the easiest; but the hardest thing is getting started.

START, THEN STOP TOO SOON

Another great mistake many have made in dealing with offenders is to make a start, then just quit. The mistake was not in starting but in stopping before they finished. Sometimes elders will start, then one will weaken and back out, which will cause some trouble; then usually the elder who shirked his duty will lay the blame for the evil that followed on to the other elder or the preacher, as the case may be. In Prov. 25:19 Solomon says, 'Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint.' How true this is! Many have put too much confidence in elders or preachers when it was putting confidence in unfaithful men. Many times preachers will start, then quit when about half done. The church is little better off, if any. But in all such cases where elders or preachers have made mistakes we should give them space for repentance A certain elder and a preacher started to purge sin out of a church. Just as soon as the elder saw that his son would have to be dealt with he wanted to quit, but the preacher went on and brought his son to repentance; then the elder, seeing his mistake, was willing to do his duty. But that preacher cherished a secret contempt against that elder, which he ought not to have held. When a man repents, and does his duty, Paul says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." (1st Tim. 5:17.)

KEEP IT UP!

Many times churches will take a notion to withdraw from disorderly members, then take a rest for awhile until several more do wrong, then possibly let it drop, thinking, "Well, we did withdraw from some once!" Possibly so, but that wont help those who have since become disorderly. In 2nd Thess. 3:13 Paul admonished the brethren to "Be not weary in well-doing"; he then was writing to them about withdrawing from disorderly members, and admonished them not to be weary in well-doing, meaning not to grow weary in excluding disorderly members whenever they became disorderly. Now and then erring members, who have been withdrawn from, make a confession and come back into the church, then get disorderly again. In such case we are not to grow weary in well-doing, but withdraw from them again! In Exodus, from the 7th to the 13th chapters, is a record of God sending one plague after another upon the Egyptians. They were repeated until God had accomplished his purpose. Even so with disorderly members: as long as necessary they are to be excluded, until God's purpose is accomplished and the church is purified and freed from sin.

WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT?

When it becomes necessary to deal with disorderly members, many wonder what will be the result; because they fear trouble they fall to do what the Lord says. We know the result if we don't. It is just plain disobedience. It is not our place to refuse to obey the Bible because we cannot see the outcome. Rest assured that if the work is done right that it will come out all right. God gave the instructions for us to follow; He will take care of the consequences. Sometimes there is a temporary disturbance, but it is only for awhile. Remember, "All things work together for good to them that love God."(Rom. 8:28.) WE MUST OBEY GOD REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES!

In Acts 20:22,23 Paul didn't know what would befall him, only that there was trouble ahead of him, — yet he said, "None of these things move me." He was willing to take what followed.

AS NECESSARY AS BAPTISM

Whenever the church can persuade a person to be baptized, it is their duty to see that he is. If the church fails to baptize anyone who should be, it fails to do its duty. If any members of the church object to baptizing such a person, they surely do wrong. The Scriptures are just as plain on withdrawing from disorderly members as they are on baptism; God meant what he said about both. Many members have strong convictions about baptism, and little regard for what the Lord said about withdrawing from disorderly members. One is just as plain and as necessary as the other is. If a church refuses, or fails, to withdraw from a disorderly member, it might as well refuse to baptize a person! Members of the Church of Christ wonder why others pay so little attention to the Bible teachings on baptism. Maybe for the reason some members of the Church of Christ pay as little attention to the Bible teaching on withdrawing from disorderly

members. Each command is the word of the Lord. Let us remember that God does not keep company with sin. In Luke 16:13 Christ said, "'Ye cannot serve God and mammon." By reading Josh. 7th chapter we learn that a man stole, and put the stolen goods among his stuff. In verse 12 God says, "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you," — they had to stone this man to get God to remain among them. In Rev. 2:5 God called on the church at Ephesus to repent or he would remove the candlestick. God will not keep company with sin.

SOME ARE TURNED AGAINST IT

In some places the churches have tried to withdraw from disorderly members and failed. Some have lost their temper; as a result, the church was left in a worse condition. As a result of such failures, many of the old members, remembering their former experiences, seem to think that it will be that way next time; thus they are not in favor of starting it again, as they say, "It will only cause trouble." They overlook the fact that their effort that failed was not according to the Scriptures! Persons who are liable to lose their tempers should allow persons of more composure to proceed. When all display the spirit of Christ only good will come from withdrawing from disorderly members.

"LET US ALONE"

Thus the evil spirit cried out in Mark 1:24 and that has been his cry ever since. When he is in the church his cry is, "Let us alone! Let us alone!" Nothing serves the purpose of the unclean spirit any better than being let alone. If sin is let alone in the church it isn't long until the church has fast its influence or is destroyed. Many times members of the church become the agents of the unclean spirit, and take up his cry, "Let us alone!" The devil never wanted anything better than to be let alone in the church, so that he can destroy it!

INTERFERING

Sometimes, for various reasons, when the church withdraws from evil members some have interfered and interrupted the meeting. In such cases those who have opposed the action of the church, unless they have scriptural reasons, should be withdrawn from themselves! Had many churches done this they would have saved trouble. Where interfering or disorderly members oppose the scriptural action of the church, and rail on the eldership or the church, they should be brought to repentance or withdrawn from without delay, proceeding even over their protests, if they cannot show scripture for such protests.

OLD MEMBERS

We meet most objections to withdrawing from disorderly members from the older members of the church. The young members can be taught what the Bible says about casting out sin, and they are willing for it to be done; but with men or women who have been members of the

church for years, and have not been taught along this line, and where the church has been disorderly for years, they usually oppose it. They say, "We have been members of the church for a long time, and now we don't want to do anything that will cause trouble." No doubt they have lived that way for a long time, yet they haven't done what the Bible said about "casting out sin." Just because in their own estimation they have lived in the church with sin is no reason that God commends such a course. Such members just get used to living in sin; they get so they can bear evil, unlike the church at Ephesus. (Rev. 2:2.) That church couldn't bear "them that are evil." That church withdrew from evil members, and Christ commended it. If you would investigate the church-membership of many churches that have lived for a long time without withdrawing from disorderly members, you would in most cases find that sin has caused such churches to die, and that many of such members have moved to other congregations after theirs went down. I have yet to see the church that will exist for years with all manner of sin in it! I have investigated two cases of persons who have been members of the church, for over forty years, that didn't believe in withdrawing from disorderly members: One case was a man who was an elder. (The congregation died under his eldership!) For a time he did not attend worship; later he now and then went to a neighboring congregation. After awhile a congregation was started, and he was hastily appointed to the eldership. When it became necessary for the church to withdraw from evil members this elder refused to act. In the other case the church had gone down two or three times. Such old members seemed to be contented, like the people (in the 8th chapter of Acts) who followed Simon the sorcerer — they had been bewitched for a long time. Such old members who oppose this part of the Gospel influence some against it by reason of their age, but Job says: "Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment." (Job 32:9.)

WRONG TO OPPOSE

Where the church has not been taught to withdraw from disorderly members some oppose it. It is wrong to oppose the church in withdrawing from disorderly members! According to 1st Cor. 5:2, Paul rebuked these brethren because they did not want this young man cast out. They wanted him to stay in the church. Because of taking such a course Paul said they were "puffed up." In Rev. 2:2 the church at Ephesus could not bear evil, — Christ commends them. They all agreed to withdraw from them. Read Num. 16th chapter, and see how God dealt with some wicked men. Then read verse 41: "But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Here these people opposed a work of God,—they murmured against Moses and Aaron simply because they helped the Lord to execute judgment against these wicked men. They did wrong! They should have stood by Moses and Aaron, and helped them instead of opposing. In verse 45 God was going to destroy them because they opposed it. He said, "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." One of the worst things a member of the church can do is to oppose the church when it is doing the will of the Lord. Opposing the

church in dealing with sin means to allow the "little leaven, to leaven the whole lump.". (See 1st Cor. 5:7.) To oppose this work means to cover up sin in the church; but (according to Prov. 28:13) such a church would not prosper. Many churches have started to withdraw from disorderly members, and some opposed it; then the work stopped, leaving the church in open rebellion against all that God said about keeping it pure. Instead of stopping, the church should have withdrawn from them. The "leaven" surely had worked on them.

DISORDERLY MEMBERS WILL OPPOSE

In most cases members who are not living right will oppose the church in withdrawing from disorderly members. Such members know that if the church starts to withdraw from other disorderly members, and justice is meted out, that it will include them also. Thus they oppose it. When a member of the church, without scriptural reason, opposes such work, a careful watch might reveal some disorder in his life! A thief is not going to demand that the police force do their duty, for they might catch HIM Members who do not attend Lord's day worship usually will oppose the idea of the church dealing with members who will not attend worship. If justice is had they know that it will include them; thus they oppose it.

DISORDERLY PREACHERS

Sometimes preachers for a time live double lives. Their influence among the churches, on dealing with disorder, is very bad. They do not preach to the church to cast out sinners, because they know that if justice were done it would include them also. Some preachers are very weak on church government. When a member of the church asks them for advice what is given is very weak, and it serves further to weaken that member. Then when the church wants to deal with disorder, such members will oppose it, and quote that preacher as "authority when the preacher is evil himself! Solomon says, "Evil men understand not Judgment," (Prov. 28:6.) Sometimes preachers meddle in the affairs of the church after they have withdrawn from evil members. An excluded member wants nothing better against the church than for some preacher to take up his side. Where congregations have made mistakes in casting out a member, it is for the good of that church to correct it. Preachers should stand by the righteous acts of the congregations, and call on offenders to repent, rather than aid them and thus strengthen the hands of the wicked. (Ezek. 13:22.) I knew of a congregation once that decided to withdraw from all who would not do their duty. Some in the church didn't do their duty, and for that reason opposed it. Soon another preacher came to hold them a meeting. Some ventured to ask him if it was right to withdraw from members, who could do their duty but would not come to worship on Lord's day. The preacher said he did not believe they could withdraw from them. (These opposers had a preacher on their side, — they then fought harder than ever — quoting this preacher!) But what kind of a preacher was he? Just like them! — HE didn't always go to worship himself on Lord's day. Many times he would stay away from the Lord's table. There was no congregation where he lived, and when he was at home and not

preaching he didn't attend to worship. No wonder such a preacher would take such a stand! It would have included him!! For a preacher to take a scriptural stand on this point, he must do his own duty. Many indifferent preachers, who are weak on church government, have done much damage among the churches.

THE "WHEAT" AND THE "TARES"

In Matt. 13:24-30 is recorded the parable of the "wheat" and "tares." In verse 30 you will notice that the Lord says, "Let the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest." This means, let the good and bad people live. Some have supposed that "the field" was the Church, and that the Lord meant to let good and bad members both stay in a church together until the harvest. If you will read verse 38 you will see that "the field" is the world, and not the Church. The righteous must live in a country among wicked people, yet we are not to be wicked. We are not to kill wicked people, for we might convert them. If they were killed they might root up some of "the wheat" with "the tares." Letting "the wheat" and "tares" grow together furnishes no authority for keeping sinners in the church.

THE BARREN FIG TREE

See Luke 13:8. Because the Lord said, "Wait another year,." some say the church must wait one year before they can withdraw from a sinner. They are surely mistaken! A fig tree can only bear fruit in its season, which is once per year. They were to fertilize this tree and wait until fruit-bearing time to see if it bore fruit. The lesson is: we are to teach a sinner his duty, and wait to see if it bears any fruit. His fruit-bearing season is oftener than once per year. He can bear fruit at least every seven days, especially if his sin is "forsaking the assembly." To say this scripture means to teach that we must wait a year before excluding a member, is to misapply it. Just give him time to repent. If he does he has borne "fruit"; if not, cut him off. It doesn't take a man a year to bring fruits of repentance.

TOO HASTY

One of the most common objections against purging out leaven is: "It was too hasty I" when it ought to have been done long ago. The more I note the evil effects of such objection I am persuaded that Satan is the author of it, because he is the only one that is profited by it. Casting out disorderly members is equal to casting out Satan, for he works through them. Who else but Satan would be benefited by the church being slow? The slower the better — for Satan; he can stay in the church longer and do more damage. Those who object to dealing with disorderly members because they think it was done "too hastily" are not the ones who start it. They know it ought to be done, and they don't want to do their duty! Whenever anyone does take the lead such objectors see they must do their duty or else try to get out of it some way, and when they cannot deny it they stand back and say, "Too hasty (too hasty!)" Their doctrine is to put it off, — and soon the devil has the church! Who but Satan gains anything? Suppose a fire is destroying

your house, and you are delayed in putting it out, — who gains but the fire? When a wolf is destroying a flock of sheep, and you delay killing him, who gains but the wolf? When a little leaven is working on the church, who gains but the leaven when you delay purging it out? When the devil is destroying the church, and you delay action against him, who gains but the devil? By practicing the doctrines of "delaying," "putting it off," and "don't be too hasty," the devil is the only one that gains, or profits, by them. I know of some church members that are disorderly, and their elders say that they are going to withdraw from them, but each time they put it off, —and they are still putting it off! Someone is liable to die before they deal with him. Satan wants nothing better than "putting it off." When he can get the eldership thoroughly converted to his doctrine of "putting it off," he has that church. When sin entered the Garden of Eden, God attended to the matter AT ONCE! In Gen. 2:17—"For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die" — notice THAT VERT DAY they were to die! THAT VERY DAY they were driven out of the Garden of Eden, and died to (or were separated from) God! Death means a separation. According to Num. 16:7, these sinners were to appear before the Lord TOMORROW—there wasn't much delay about it. In verse 12 someone wanted to 'put it off,' but he was one of the wicked men. Here is where the doctrine of "putting it off started,—It came from the wrong side! But you will notice that Moses didn't allow it to be put off.

According to Num. 16:46, Moses sent Aaron to make an atonement, He told him to GO QUICKLY, In verse 47. Aaron ran in among the congregation, in verse 49. He was then too slow to save 14,700 people. Had he delayed, more people would have died. Suppose some people in this age had been there? No doubt they would have accused Aaron of being "too hasty"; but the fact of the matter is that he was too slow to save 14,700! (Read Exo. 32:15.) When Moses saw that Aaron had led God's people off into Idolatry, he lost no time in correcting them. (Read Num. 25th chapter.) When Phinehas saw this wicked man and woman among the Jews he lost no time in slaying them. He hastened to attend to it, to keep his own brethren from corrupting themselves. Suppose someone should have accused Phinehas of being "too hasty,"—it would have had to come from some of those Jews who wanted to corrupt themselves with this woman before Phinehas slew her! In verse 12, God gave Phinehas his covenant of peace, because he was zealous for his God. The Almighty did not accuse him of being "too hasty," but commended him. According to verse 6, Moses saw it, but was slow in acting. Yet the one who was quick to act was the one that God commended. Some seem to think that if they will show a sinner favor, by "putting it off," that they will help to convert him and teach him righteousness; but in Isa. 26:10 we learn that showing favor to the wicked will not teach him righteousness! Nothing is gained here by delay. Now read Eccl. 8:11 — "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." This scripture shows that it takes quick action. It is dangerous to delay sentence, for a person's heart may become fully set la him to do evil. How many churches will be held to account in the Pay of Judgment because they have put off executing sentence against sinners, and thus have allowed their hearts to become fully set in them "to do evil!" Many will be "weighed in the balance and found wanting" because they have followed that doctrine of "putting it off until "a

little leaven leavened the whole lump." Some churches may have to give an account because they didn't act according to the Bible, but I fail to see how a church can be too nasty to correct one of its members that sins. If a member is dealt with before he commits a sin then it would be too hasty. You can often do more with a sinner ten minutes after he sins than you can ten days afterward. There is nothing gained by putting off obeying the Gospel and being baptized. Just as well put off baptism as discipline; they are both Gospel works.

"TOO YOUNG"

This is an objection usually urged against young preachers or new members in the church when they urge upon the church the necessity of dealing with offenders. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1st Tim. 4:12—"Let no man despise thy youth." Timothy was a young man, but Paul entrusted him with an important work. Suppose some had objected to this work being done simply because Timothy was a young man? They would have surely done wrong. Some today seem to reason: The preacher was a young man, therefore we don't have to follow the Bible. David was a young man when he slew Goliath. (See 1st Sam. 17.) King Saul, who had already rebelled against God, opposed David by saying in verse 33, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth." Saul thought David was too young, but God didn't think so. David here was accused of being "too young," but note that it was A REBELLIOUS MAN THAT MADE THE ACCUSATION! We had better be careful, and not follow in the footsteps of Saul. Young David, by the help of God, slew the giant. Just because a person is young is no reason why he can't do what the Lord said. Many times churches have been set in order by older preachers who preached for them along time. Some of these old preachers have preached very little discipline and practiced less. Some young preachers have been called to assist them in meetings who after learning of sin and disorder in the church urged them to cast it out. They got some to believe what the Lord said. They insisted on the church dealing with its offenders. Some of the older members who had lived in sin for a long time objected to doing the will of the Lord. They for an excuse said the preachers were "too young," and fell back on the old preacher. Their strong argument was, "The old preacher,—the old preacher." They would say, "Well, that preaching sounds all right, but — he is too young. Our old preacher who started us never preached that way, and, besides, we have known him for 25 years." Such old preachers, like Simon the sorcerer, in Acts 8th chapter, had "bewitched" them for a long time. They just failed to declare "the whole counsel of God"; then when younger preachers began to declare "the whole counsel" such members fled for refuge to the old preacher — not thinking that the old brethren, though they meant well, failed to teach them church government. Job 32:9 says, "Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment." Just because a preacher is old of itself doesn't prove that he understands judgment. But the old preacher who stands firmly for the whole counsel of God has a greater influence over men and women than young preachers have. We need old preachers of the right kind, and young ones, too. Very few of the old preachers preached much about church government; most of their

time was spent in baptizing sinners and converting sectarians, to the neglect of church government. As a result, many churches went "digressive" that could have been saved had they understood church government.

"WASN'T DONE RIGHT"

Many who are withdrawn from for rebellion, heresy, or immorality, usually say: "It wasn't done right" This is an old objection which amounts to but little. Why not make a plea of "not guilty" of the offense? Such persons know they are guilty, hence their plea is: instead of denying it just say, "It wasn't done right." Suppose it wasn't done right when they were excluded, THAT DOESN'T MAKE THEM INNOCENT Many times sympathy is enlisted by offenders because they say that "it wasn't done right." If it is true, why did they not help the church do it right, if they are so anxious to have things done "right"? One man who is down tries to get the other fellow down, so they will both be down! When one man does wrong, proving "the other fellow" wrong doesn't make him right.

"HALF-HEARTED"

Usually when God's servants execute his law, and cast sinners out of the church, some of the members violate the principle set forth in Deut. 13:8, and pity the sinners insomuch that they say, "The elder was hard-hearted in doing what he did." They are mistaken. He only had AN OBEDIENT HEART. In Num. 25th chapter, when Phinehas slew the wicked man and woman, some might have accused HIM of being "hard-hearted." He had an obedient heart, — he was only doing the will of the Lord. In 1st Sam. 15th chapter Saul disobeyed God, and spared the life of Agag the king. According to verse 33, after Samuel had reproved Saul he took this king and hewed him to pieces before the Lord. Samuel was not hardhearted, — he was obedient-hearted. In Acts 5th chapter two people lost their lives under the work of the Apostle Peter. Some may think Peter was hard-hearted, but he was only obedient. There are many things we need to do in our Christian life that may seem unpleasant, yet we are to do them and obey God anyway.

OFFENDED AT THE WORD

It is not uncommon for some members of the church to "fall out" with elders, preachers or leaders, because they urge the church to purge out sin. They claim "offense" at the man who does what the word of the Lord says. They are simply offended at the Word! In Matt. 13:21 Christ spoke of people who, "because of the word, by and by were offended." Many times when members say that they "fall out" with the preacher, (when he only preached the Word,) it is the same old story — offended at the Word.

CAN A WOMAN BE WITHDRAWN FROM?

Now and then there are some who are willing to cast out the men but seem to doubt if a woman could be withdrawn from. I have known of women in the church putting men up to causing trouble. The men were excluded and the women spared. In such cases the church did not get the real offender. Any member of the church is to be withdrawn from when he becomes disorderly, if he will not repent, regardless of whether it be a man or a woman. According to Num. 25th chapter, Phinehas didn't spare this woman. In Acts 5th chapter the woman met the same fate that her husband did, after Peter learned that they both agreed together. Both were guilty. God didn't spare these simply because they were women.

MAKING A SHOW FOR AWHILE

Sometimes when churches fail to cast out sin until they get several disorderly members and then undertake it, the disorderly members pull away and set up the worship at another place. For awhile they make a show of success, but it doesn't last long. In Judges 20th chapter, when the Benjamites received the sons of Belial, and the Israelites went to war against them, the Benjamites made a show of success by winning the first two battles, —but it didn't last long. They were soon defeated. Members may pull away from the church and set up the worship, making a great display for awhile; but David says (In Psa. 37:35) — "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passeth away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him and he could not be found." In Acts 5:36 Theudas rose up, boasting himself to be some one, pulling away about 400 men. No doubt they made a big display for awhile, — but it didn't last long. They were soon scattered and brought to naught. Inverse 37 Judas of Galilee drew away much people after him. No doubt they made a great show of success for awhile, but they were soon scattered. In the days of the Apostles evil men arose and led others astray. The same is being done today! All such either are scattered 'or desert the truth, or are deserted by such leaders.

THREATENING

When it becomes necessary for the church to withdraw from disorderly members sometimes such members, or their relatives, threaten the church with a law-suit, or are going to do some of them violence. In some cases churches, or their members, have been a little scared. In Eccl. 12:13 we are told to "fear God and keep his commandments." We are not to fear man. When God says to withdraw from them, and man says that if you do you will get into trouble; we are to fear God and obey him,—not fear man and disobey God. When the church excludes disorderly members, according to the Scriptures, let them threaten,—that is all they can do! It will only show their evil disposition, and be additional proof that they ought to have been withdrawn from. The civil laws will uphold a religious body in scripturally dealing with wicked men. Many times members have given money to help build a meeting house, or to buy ground that it stood on, then later became disorderly. Some members will refuse to stand by the

church in dealing with such persons, "because they helped to build the meeting house," fearing "they will take the property." If the property is properly deeded to the church they cannot take it according to our laws, when a person gives to charity or religious work he gives with no hope of getting it back. In Acts 4:29—"And now, Lord, behold their threatening and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Here the Apostles were threatened, but it did not stop them. Such is the way the church should proceed in the face of THREATENING. When a member is withdrawn from he can do nothing. In John 15:5 — "For without me you can do nothing," Christ says. They are helpless, but they may try to use someone in the church. By all members standing together with the Lord such threats will do the church no harm.

DO DISORDERLY MEMBERS NEED TO BE PRESENT WHEN WITHDRAWN FROM?

That depends. Sometimes they won't come. There is no set rule in the Bible on this point. It is left to the judgment of the church. 1st Cor. 6:12 and Jude 1:22 leaves these matters to the judgment of the church. Sometimes a stir is made by some, because they say, "You didn't tell me you were going to withdraw from me." Well you can't tell something you don't know. The church must meet to decide. You can request such a person to be present, to meet the decision of the church. The Bible doesn't require you to tell something you don't know. Peter didn't notify Sapphira what was to be done. (Acts 5:7.)

WHEN ELDERS REFUSE TO HEAR ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THEM

Where elders refuse to receive correction and will not come to a meeting of the church; when they deny a preacher his duty; the faithful brethren do not need to wait until he is present. If they would try it in some cases they would be waiting yet. Some elders say, "You didn't notify me of a trial." Why try a man when he has proven himself guilty!

When a man defies the sheriff, fortifies himself in his house in defiance of all law, they take him dead or alive without a trial. When erring elders refuse all attempts at correction, why a definite notice? They wouldn't come any way. Do the courts wait for the outlaw to walk up for trial. No. Then why demand the church wait for a man you can't get to come? Erring members who have been dealt with try to justify themselves by saying, "You didn't notify me," as if the Bible was full of commands to tell disorderly members all about what you are going to do when you don't know yourself, until the church has decided. When a disorderly member knows that meetings are being held to correct evils that is all the Bible requires. In 1st Cor. 5:4—"When ye are gathered together"—any meeting of the church. When the church meets to consider the case of erring members and they are threatened or driven from the meetinghouse by such members, why the necessity of notifying them just what you are going to do? The one who delivers the notice is in danger of bodily harm sometimes. Christ kept away from such people. Paul was let down from a window in a basket. The Bible doesn't require Christians to expose themselves to bodily harm at the hands of erring members who can wield a stick (a carnal

weapon) easier than the Sword of the Spirit, or people who can pull their coats to display a growth in pugilistic rather than growth in grace.

CALL THE RIGHT ONE TO ASSIST

The church should exercise care in calling a preacher to assist it in dealing with sin. A preacher who is unacquainted with the teachings of the Scriptures on church government, or has not put them into practice, is not the man. A preacher must know, before he can tell, or advise, for the welfare of the church. In Acts 10th chapter when God directed Cornelius to Simon He gave him plain instructions. He was directed to a Simon whose surname was Peter, — "he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side." God wished Cornelius to be sure and get the right Simon. The right man meant much to Cornelius! If a church calls a preacher who does not attend worship every Lord's day, he is not likely to advise the church to withdraw from members who do not come. If the preacher has the idea of getting "big numbers into the church," and has lived among disorderly members since he has been in the Church, he will be a detriment to the church that calls him to help in cases of disorder,— unless he reforms. If any assistance *is* needed, get the right kind!

CAST-OUT MEMBERS

When members are cast out they are helpless. They will many times unite with other religious bodies, if possible, in order to work against the body that cast them out. Usually the church can expect nothing but opposition from cast-off members. Whenever they have relatives or friends in the church they will try and work through them against the church, especially if they will apologize for them. Congregations should watch such cases! When parents are withdrawn from and the children are not, such parents usually try to work through their children. Whenever such children allow their parents to use them against the church they should be brought to repentance, or withdrawn from too, for the welfare of the church.

DIOTREPES

In 3rd John 1; 9 DIOTREPES cast out some members from the church whom John regarded as brethren. He wasn't casting out sinners, but good brethren,—so that he could have the pre-eminence, or be the leader. Sometimes when evil persons are withdrawn from they accuse the elder of being "like DIOTREPES," but their accusation is false. If an elder should exclude brethren who are not in rebellion against the church, but in good standing with the Lord, then he can be classed with this man DIOTREPES, — but not when he casts out sinners, heretics or reprobates. RETALIATION. — It is human nature for people to want to "get back at the other fellow," When members of the church bring an accusation against another member, many times that member wants to "get even with them" for bringing the accusation. When it is settled, the accused proceeds to file a counter-charge against them. This is the wrong course for Christians to pursue! If someone wrong fully accuses you, meet the accusation and prove it

untrue, — but, if true, confess it and seek forgiveness. Don't seek revenge! If your accusers are guilty of sin, let the church handle their case. VENGEANCE BELONGS TO THE LORD. In Acts 10th chapter, where Peter converted some Gentiles, some of the church at Jerusalem accused him of doing wrong. In the 11th chapter he made his defense, proved that God had accepted the Gentiles, and the matter was dropped. Because he was falsely accused he didn't try to retaliate by trying to find something against his accusers. This is also a case of a false accusation by part of the church. Just as soon as the truth was made known the matter was dropped. The Jerusalem brethren were honest in the matter, — they were not doing it through strife. Sometimes churches make a mistake in dealing with an offender, — whenever convinced simply make it right, then drop the matter, as these brethren did. But if these brethren had been trying to handle Peter through strife they would have looked for something else when that failed.

HERESY

Heresy means "false doctrine"; a doctrine not found in the Bible, Any person who advocates a false doctrine is a heretic. In Gal. 5:21 Paul names "heresies" as "works of the flesh," and says: "They that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," According to Titus 3:10, a heretic is to be admonished twice, and then rejected. In 2nd Tim. 2:17,18 two men taught a heresy — that the resurrection was past — which overthrew the faith of those that accepted it. This false doctrine, or heresy, made all such heretics. When many of the churches began to use innovations they were heresies. For instance, instrumental music in worship, societies to do the work of the church, and different ways to raise money. Their advocates were heretics, and should have been rejected.

THE DEVIL'S LAST STAND

We sometimes read of a great general's "last stand." He selects a place to retreat to, to make his strongest fight and last stand. We are led to believe that church government is the devil's last stand. It means that if the church casts out sin that Satan will lose his hold on the church. Satan tries to get people not to obey the Gospel, but if they just will obey, all right; then he wants them to aid him in leavening the church so he can thus reclaim those who have left him by obeying the Gospel. When the church attempts to withdraw from Satan's servants who are in the church he then can work on their relatives and friends and get them to oppose it, so his servants will have time to destroy the church. If he fails on this point, he can yet raise up someone who is afraid to start "for fear that there is no place to stop." If the preacher still urges the church to cast out sin Satan can next pick up some reproach against the preacher, and get his servants to peddle it out. But if Satan falls on his "slander weapon," and he sees that the church is determined, he agrees to it, — but raises up someone who only wants to "put out a few," so that Satan can work through the rest. If he sees that the church is determined to cast them all out, he will agree, but get someone to raise the cry of "Don't be too hasty!"—so that

he can work longer. But when Satan sees that the church is determined, he next tries to get them to "put it off." (At this point Satan converts many.) When he gets a church fully converted to his doctrine of "putting it off," he has that church. Thus it is "put off until Satan gets a better hold on the church or until the strong ones weaken. But when the church rises up and casts out disorderly members REGARDLESS OF SATAN—it means his defeat! Truly, here is the devil's "last stand," Casting out sinners is the strongest test of the faith of many. See 2nd Cor. 2:9.

"WENT OUT FROM US"

Here is a scripture that applies to members who turn away from and leave the church. 1st John 2:19— "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us they no doubt would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." Sometimes preachers leave the truth, to go with the largest number, so they can get more money. "They went out from us, for they were not of us!" While such have already left us, yet each church needs to bring the matter up and order an entry made accordingly on their church record.

THE ELDERSHIP

It is with a degree of caution that we approach this subject. In the wisdom of God men that came up to a certain standard were set apart to the eldership of congregations. They were called "elders," "pastors," "bishops" and "stewards." According to 1st Tim. 3rd chapter, a bishop was an official in the church. Paul spoke of "the office of a bishop." In this same chapter is a record of the qualifications of an elder. A man that comes up to these qualifications is surely a good man and will be an aid to any church. According to Titus 1:5, Paul left Titus in Crete "to set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city." According to history, it was a few years after these congregations were established before elders were selected. This teaches that those churches existed for a time without elders. Congregations today can exist without elders. Preachers should not be too quick to appoint officers. Congregations should carry on the work of the church without officers until men develop the qualifications among them. According to 2nd Tim. 2:2, a man must be faithful and able to teach in order to be a preacher. If he sins and thus becomes unfaithful, he is to be no longer regarded as a preacher. When nature, by her wear on his body or mind, leaves him unable to teach, he is then disqualified by nature. When an elder sins, and thus becomes disqualified, he is to remain an elder no longer. When nature disqualifies him for service he is relieved. We are all to do our duty as long as we can, but when nature removes our strength so that we can no longer work, we are relieved. If every Christian would be faithful until relieved from duty by nature, the church would be much better off.

REPROVING AN ELDER

There has lately been some controversy over removing elders, and the duty of preachers, by some preachers who evidently are unacquainted with church government. Such preachers, who have taken issue with Christ and Paul about removing elders, show either a lack of knowledge of Bible teaching on this point or else disregard what it does say. I am acquainted with the work of some of these preachers, having known them to pass over the plainest cases of discipline and then attempt to tell all about how to handle the difficult ones! Such preachers either don't understand church government or else don't put it into practice. A schoolteacher who does not understand addition could not be trusted in decimal fractions; neither could a preacher be trusted in dealing with elders who does not first learn how to deal with the other members. This is a common mistake of many religious teachers. Many teachers who do not understand the plain divisions of the Bible will tell you "all about" prophecy and Revelation, ACCORDING TO THEIR MINDS. Before they can be trusted they must learn the plain things to aid them in understanding harder parts of the Bible. In view of this we are not surprised to hear such preachers say that an elder cannot be removed. According to Titus 1:7, an elder, or bishop, is a steward. The point at issue is: does the Bible teach that a steward can be no longer a steward, or does the Lord take away the stewardship from an unfaithful steward? When we have proven that an unfaithful steward can be no longer steward, and that the Lord takes away the stewardship, then we have proven that an elder can be removed from the eldership. From Titus 1:7 we learned that an elder is a steward. In Luke 16th chapter in the first part of this parable Christ lays down certain facts in order to reach a conclusion, to teach a lesson. We are not trying to tell you that the main point in this parable is the removing of elders, but we do mean to teach you that that subject is involved. This steward had wasted his master's goods, and for that reason was to be no longer steward, for the lord took away from him the stewardship. The Church is Christ's goods (see Acts 20:28); He purchased it with his own blood. When an elder (who is a steward) conducts himself in such a manner as to cause members to turn away from the Lord, he is unfaithful, and has wasted his master's goods. According to Christ's teaching, such a man is to be no longer steward, — which, when applied to the eldership, would mean that the Lord took away the eldership! Notice, this unjust steward offered a compromise,—just what an unfaithful elder will do. By reading Acts 1:20 we learn another was to take the office of Judas, —"His bishopric let another take." According to 1st Tim. 5:19, a preacher is the only one who has any scriptural teaching even to receive an accusation against elders. In Titus 1:7 he is to appoint them. The same power that appoints elders removes them, when unfaithful. That power is God working through a faithful preacher by His word! No other person has a right to appoint or remove an elder but a preacher. If so; where is the scriptural Some have contended that in 1st Tim. 5:20 an erring elder is to be rebuked, but not removed. The definition of the Greek word from which we get "rebuke" means to discipline. One of the best rebukes many times for some elders is to remove them; some for awhile and some permanently.

OLD AGE

As old age comes on the powers of the human family weaken, leaving people unable properly to perform all the duties of life. In the course of nature elders become old, their eye-sight, hearing, speech and memory "become impaired, — they cannot live always. Some few elders of good judgment have set a good example by requesting the congregation to relieve them of the responsibility of an elder, and select others, and thus aid others in the eldership, so that when they are gone there would be someone to look after the church. Such a course is advisable, when a congregation is working in peace and harmony and others, are qualified to be elders. Where there is a factious element in the church, trying to overthrow it, it is not advisable for a firm elder to retire until peace is restored. In 1st Sam. 8th chapter, — when Samuel became old he retired from being judge, in favor of his sons. They proved unfaithful. Yet the Bible gives Samuel's age as a reason why he ceased to be judge. Samuel after being relieved from the judgeship counseled and advised with God's people, and said he would pray for them.

TWO ELDERS: ONE WRONG

There is more than one elder in many congregations. When important work comes up, and sinners need to be excluded, sometimes one elder will not stand with the church and do his duty, leaving it in confusion. Just what to do in such case, is the question with many. They want to do what is right, yet they don't want to rebel against an elder. In 1st Tim. 5:17 Paul says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." Here the Bible recognizes the faithful elder. The elders that "rule well" are to be recognized above those who do not. If you want to stand with the Lord stand with the faithful elder and the Bible. In verse 19 Paul told Timothy, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." This scripture authorizes a preacher of the Gospel to receive an accusation against an elder, but then two witnesses are required. According to Luke 16, the accused steward was to be no longer steward. Titus 1:7 authorized the preacher to "set in order the things that are wanting." In such a case the truth would want an unfaithful steward out of the stewardship. Whenever it becomes necessary to remove an elder a preacher will need to be called, if the scripture is followed. As for those who deny that an erring elder can be removed by a preacher, let them produce another scriptural plan! In Exo. 32nd chapter is an account of two leaders: Moses and Aaron. When Moses went up on the mount to receive the law Aaron led the children of Israel off into Idolatry. Moses learned of it when he came down from the mount. Here one leader is faithful and the other rebellious. By reading the rest of the chapter you will note that there are two sides to this trouble: Moses, Joshua and the Lord are on one side, while Aaron and the rebellious Jews are on the other. God here worked through the faithful leader Moses, and settled the trouble by bringing the Jews to repentance, and punishing the offenders, and He wasn't long at it!

Where one elder refuses to follow the Scriptures, even though the greater part of the congregation is with him, yet God stands with the faithful leader and right.

WHEN AN ELDER REFUSES TO ACT

In cases where men have been placed in the eldership who are not qualified or have since turned aside, so that sin enters the church, it will depend upon the .faithful members to adjust matters and purify the church. If the elder is to be removed it will require the same power to remove him: that placed him there; according to Titus 1:5, God used a preacher for that purpose. In 1st Tim. 6:19 He also used a preacher to bear the accusation. When the elder is convicted by at least two witnesses, or his own confession of his own handwriting, he is to be removed! Sometimes elders confess a sin, sometimes they write letters which convict them; but when there is a denial, and witnesses are needed, it takes two to prove it. In Gal. 6:1 — "Ye which are spiritual restore such an one." Here the restoring is to be done by those who "are spiritual." When an elder is not spiritual the Lord does not require him to restore any one. In Num. 6th chapter some of the Jews brought in an ungodly woman. Moses (who was the leader) saw it, but was slow in acting. But when Phinehas saw it he lost no time" in slaying these sinners, and God commended him for it. God has throughout all ages stood by and worked through his faithful servants. He does yet today. The faithful ones in the church are the ones that keep it going. When an elder refuses fa do bis duty he should be brought to repentance or removed!

WHERE ALL THE ELDERS ARE WRONG

Concerning those who deny the Bible teaching on preachers duties. They say when one elder is wrong the other is to correct him. But let it be remembered they have no scripture that says so. Then when all get wrong, some say appoint another elder and he can deal with them. You cannot scripturally appoint an elder with the church in such a condition. Titus 1:6 says, "Set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders." The church must first be orderly before elders can be appointed. An elder is to begin with a church in good condition, then he can keep it that way. He is not to give account of a condition that came about before he became an elder. In leaving God's plan of preachers dealing with elders and forming, a human plan you need not be surprised to see such plan conflict with the Scripture.

HANDLING A PREACHER

Many people think preachers are above correction. THEY ARE NOT—but need correction, many times as badly as anyone else does, 1st Thess. 5:12, 13, — we are to esteem them very highly "in love for their work's sake." This esteem is only in regard to the work, and not the man. When the preacher turns aside from the work of the Lord he is no longer worthy of "esteem." Whenever a preacher becomes disorderly he should be promptly brought to repentance or excluded by the church, the same as any other member; the same is true of a deacon.